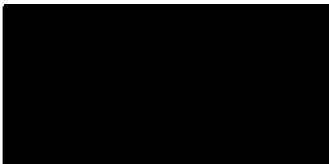


Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Tuesday, 17 February 2026

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

The cost of living crisis and inflation are not a result of rate payers but more concerningly are a result of poor business and financial management of local, state and federal governments. As for Ballina shire council, the inability to realise and update the current infrastructure prior to the covid 19 pandemic has caught the local council out during the large influx from city dwellers looking for a better way of life. If infrastructure was improved as regular improvements and not as a result to demand the impact would not have been as severe. The infrastructure that has been updated, although quite nice to look at, is quite deficient in practicality and im sure quite excessive in cost. Eg. The Sharpes Beach public carpark which has taken so long to be approved only to reduce the number of carparks available by more than half of its original capacity and purely because of aesthetics not practicality. The increase in the Ballina population in recent years should also offset the poorly recognised infrastructure lag and costs instead of making ratepayers already financially stressed pushed to breaking point.



17/02/2026

Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART)  
PO Box K35  
Haymarket Post Shop NSW 1240  
[ipart@ipart.nsw.gov.au](mailto:ipart@ipart.nsw.gov.au)

**Subject: Submission regarding OBJECTION - PROPOSED SPECIAL RATE RISE (SRV) FOR A 6% INCREASE TO GENERAL RATES EACH YEAR PLUS COMPOUND INTEREST FROM 2026/27 TO 2029/30 FOR BALLINA SHIRE POPULATION.**

Dear IPART,

Ballina Shire Council's business model has failed and Council is asking rate and rent payers to pay for their catastrophic \$8.6 million shortfall problem. In one sense Council's approach can be seen as a **conveyor belt** of money flowing from ratepayers directly to Council's invisible coffers. This is despite the fact the **cost of living crisis** is forecast to deepen in 2026. Flood and natural disasters loom again - we're preparing for another hit from potential floods and cyclones. Notwithstanding Council's 2017 Fit for the Future Improvement Plan; to be in great shape by 2020, here we are with a \$8.6 million debt. Trust in Council's management continues to reduce significantly as awareness of Council's situation increases.

Council's **case** for the big rate increase lacks managerial foresight.

It focusses on rates and their ability to increase them. Yet Council has many assets with a wide range of value and uses. Council does not indicate what measures it has taken to use these assets to generate income. And why not? Because it is much easier to jack up rates than it is to make the assets more productive and income earning. The fact is that by virtue of significant population growth, more commercial and housing allotments are sold and developed, each one adding to the rates collection which continually increasing.

So, what is it that Council is failing to do? What are the assets that are part of the urban growth but are not contributing as much as they could? Here is a short list, compiled without the information and staff that Council expended time and money on to conclude that jacking up rates is the way to go.

1. Airport and related facilities: parking, vehicle rental and shops.
2. Multiple large business buildings, facilities and complexes (owned by Council) in Ballina and industrial estates.
3. Council has industrial land sales. The practice is to sell all the land as opposed to leasing out the land which, whilst maintaining ownership, would also provide an excellent source of income indefinitely. And with indexation to inflation. Given the huge increase in demand for industrial land in Alstonville and Ballina in recent times the result of businesses wanting to relocate from flood prone areas, that per site charge could yield a tidy sum per annum, delivered monthly, providing additional income.

Council could be investing in the shire's future!

4. Smaller properties, for example 26 Endeavour Close with road and marine access could be leased for commercial purposes.
5. Dedicated Food Van parking spaces for lease i.e. Sharpe's Beach carpark, the premier pump bike track, etc. Another avenue for income generation.

These are just a few examples, sufficient to make the point. Areas where Council has invested considerable funds to create assets could be assessed with a view to increasing income from them where possible.

To foster productive economic development on behalf of the general welfare of the people of Ballina Shire, the exercise of a little creative initiative to find avenues for collecting from users of key assets should be imperative. Council claims to have peaked in providing value. There are always further opportunities for operational efficiencies.

Alternatively, Council could delay or stop some capital expenditure. For example, footpaths and shared paths (currently \$4.1 million 25/26) could be delayed a few years.

If the State accedes to the SRV request, they will bear full responsibility for it. Council is passing their responsibility to the State. In Council meetings, this attitude can be readily seen.

### **Affordability is the single biggest issue.**

What matters most to people is the cost of living. There are so many people who are struggling to pay the rent or mortgage, difficulties paying for groceries, electricity, insurance, dental and medical care, etc due to the rise in the cost of living and which is forecast to continue further. It appears Council does not comprehend the scale of this issue. They have not acted prudently, hence it's \$8.6 million shortfall. This rate rise could be the difference in a household's ability to actually pay their rates. What has Council done in an attempt to minimise rates? Instead they have increased them considerably! For example, by recently spending on projects like redeveloping (beautifying) a beach car park and a pump bike track – all very nice to have but not desperately needed.

As it is, there is a real risk many in our community will have difficulty insuring their properties. The Commonwealth could be at a higher risk in the event of another natural disaster. Locally, it is noted that floods come in threes. We have already had two flood events recently.

How would the State mitigate these risks?

The takeaway from the above is: There are multiple risks the State will have to mitigate. This latest extra rate increase should only be considered when all options have been fully analysed and implemented. The increase sought should be minimised and not added to the economic problems already occurring.

Council has **failed** to consider in its SRV application our petition sampling of 1,348 people, all but eight of whom objected to the SRV and their unwillingness to pay. Council states nothing has changed in their application.

The goal of Council should be to provide the services and facilities the community needs according to the **genuine priority of need** and at a **cost the community can afford**. While so many in our community are desperately trying to live within their means why is Council so privileged that it does not even have to try.

### **Council market research:**

Council did not do an objective, impartial survey report.

It is obvious it does not reflect the peoples' wants and needs.

Council got the answer it paid for.

Our petition had a fair sampling of 1,348 people, face to face, all but an additional eight of whom objected to the SRV, which was randomly conducted over a 4-week signature period.

Ninety eight percent of those people approached signed the petition. All were residents in Ballina Shire. What is the point of Council asking the community for an opinion and ignore it? (See BSC Special Rate Variation – feedback and surveys results.) People were approached in Alstonville, Ballina and Lennox Head on several occasions and only eight people, said they were happy to pay the rates proposed by Council. The true causes of the now \$8.6 million short fall have not been broadly explained.

### **Argument Comparisons – Efficiencies:**

The argument is not what Ballina Shire Council is doing compared to other shire councils. It's Ballina Shire Council's own historical record back to the 80's, compared to current Council management. In the past, Council's management had a good record of achieving improvements without worrying short falls. You are only as good as the systems you have in place – hence the now \$8.6 million short fall. Council's operations should be such that major short falls do not occur.

Other council's circumstances are very different to Ballina Shire Council – land values, size, demography and particularly, Ballina's growth in land supply, etc. Such comparisons are irrelevant.

A prudent council would examine its system and compare it to Ballina Council's previous successful history.

Council's practices are way out of line with Council's own successful past history.

There is no room for: there are no efficiencies to be gained, while costs are outstripping income. Council cannot say it functioned really well, year after year. Council has, and should have, more than it's one obvious way to raise funds and balance the books. Their approach unreasonably increases costs to rate and rent payers onwards to 2030 is unacceptable.

Where is the continuous improvement frame to identify and implement ongoing Assets Income generation? Their cost containment strategies are failing.

It is incomprehensible why, at this time council is planning extensive new spending, which we cannot afford, when we already have an \$8.6 m debt?

Ballina Shire Council needs to commit to doing better. It's \$8.6 million short fall is not acceptable at anytime let alone the present time. Council should have been aware of increasing costs since 2020 (SRV – Fit for the Future Program) and reined in its spending accordingly. A smaller more effective Ballina Shire Council would take pressure off household budgets.

The auditor's deputation to Council on the 23 October 2025 stated "No significant matters to be reported to Council". How can Council justify the request for an SRV? Councils available real estate assets have to be optimised by leasing rather than selling. That per site charge could yield a tidy sum per annum, delivered monthly, which would result in an increase in General Funds income and an even spread of that income.

Will IPART'S determination help households or enable Council's excessive spending? This submission should be the basis for the State to just say NO.

The appropriate confidentiality level is as per my cover sheet.

Attached please find copy of my previous letters without the petition in objection, sent to IPART and Ballina Shire Council.

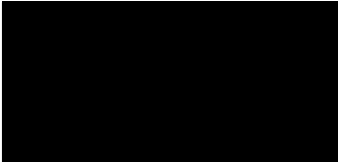
I look forward to receiving confirmation that my submission has been received and considered as part of the IPART's decision-making process.

Thank you for considering my submission.

Yours sincerely,

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.

Concerned Citizens



13/11/2025

The Mayor and Councillors  
Ballina Shire Council  
40 Cherry Street Ballina

**Subject: OBJECTION - PROPOSED SPECIAL RATE RISE (SRV) FOR A 6% INCREASE TO GENERAL RATES EACH YEAR FROM 2026/27 TO 2029/30 FOR BALLINA SHIRE POPULATION.**

Dear Mayor and Councillors of Ballina Shire Council,

We, the undersigned residents and ratepayers of the Ballina Shire Council Local Government area, write to formally object to the proposed special rate variation of 6 % plus increase to general rates each year from 2026/27 to 2029/30 for Ballina Shire residents.

Please see attached petition with 1291 signatures objecting to the Special Rate Rise.

Our community understands that rate increases may be occasionally necessary to sustain essential services; however, such measures should be a last resort and paired with robust fiscal responsibility and community backing. We believe that under the current economic climate and two devastating flood events, Council can do better. This proposed increase is an unreasonable and significant financial hardship for many residents, families and local businesses.

The reasons for my objection are as follows:

**Financial Hardship:** The continuous increase in the cost of living, including existing high rates, is already a significant burden, particularly for pensioners, low-income earners, and working families on fixed incomes. This proposed increase is unaffordable and will cause considerable financial hardship for many residents.

**Lack of Justification/Transparency:** The Council has not adequately demonstrated where the increased revenue will be spent, or effectively communicated productivity improvements and cost containment strategies. Ratepayers need a clear understanding of the necessity and specific use of any extra funds.

**Perceived Mismanagement and Wastage:** There is a perception of historical mismanagement and unnecessary spending by the council, leading to a lack of confidence that additional revenue will be managed efficiently and spent appropriately. The Council must demonstrate it is "living within its means" and making cuts where possible before imposing further burdens on residents.

Council should tell us about what they have done during the last decade to reduce the cost of doing business?

Before you ask Ratepayers for more money demonstrate what you are doing to contain costs. Why should rate payers blindly subsidise Council?

If you are asking everyone else to pay more, you have got to show you have done more.

Show how you reduced time and or cost on jobs.

Demonstrate that you have found economies of scale.

Have you called for expressions of interest from your banks? Have you got the best deals? What have you changed? We, the ratepayers, need to see the split between capital works projects and recurring items. Can capital works, be done or funded more efficiently? Are there better programs?

What value management questions have you asked? What value management processes have been undertaken? What alternative materials, processes, programs that remove unwanted costs from projects been found while keeping or improving the quality of the projects?

Is there a culture of "how can we do this better"? Asking is there a better way to do things better and easier pays off over time.

Do staff perform efficiently and are they well managed?

Why ask others to take up the slack of your miss management.

Why does Council not tell the ratepayers about the actions taken to adjust to the "overload" they claim to have. Does council not tell because it has little if anything to tell.

**Impact on the Community:** The increase would have a flow-on effect, potentially leading to increased rents and pushing long-time residents out of the area, changing the community's character.

I urge the Council to carefully reconsider this proposal and seek internal efficiencies and alternative funding sources. The rate increase should be kept to current levels with income bolstered by the rates and fees from new residents and dwellings to ensure the well-being and liveability of our community.

I look forward to receiving confirmation that my submission has been received and considered as part of the council's decision-making process.

Yours sincerely,



Concerned Citizen

**PETITION TO BALLINA SHIRE COUNCIL**

**PROPOSED SPECIAL RATE RISE (SRV) FOR A 6% INCREASE TO GENERAL RATES EACH YEAR FROM 2026/27 TO 2029/30 FOR BALLINA SHIRE POPULATION.**

I OBJECT to the proposed special rate increase; it is not justified given current conditions.

If Ballina Shire Council requires more money due to the growth in population, that money should be forthcoming from and limited to the rates resulting from significantly more dwellings and businesses. The number of Council employees has grown significantly, out stripping the increase in rated lots. Council needs to address the real issues including, perhaps, slowing down the provision of our excellent services and infrastructure and exercising it's fiduciary duty rather than forever increasingly asking the community to pay.

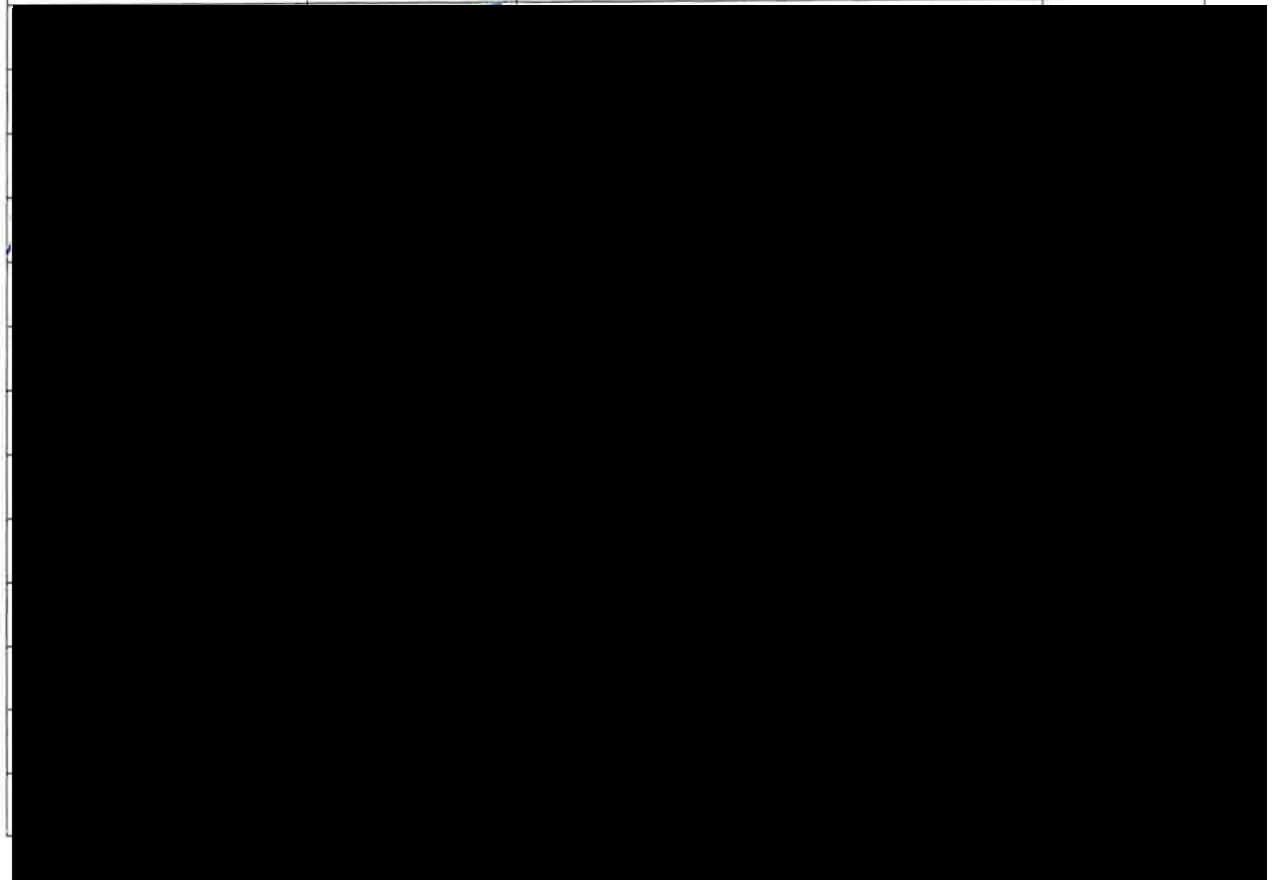
If States and Federal governments are going to continue shifting responsibilities to local councils, they must also provide matching funding, doesn't it behove Councils to demand matching funding?

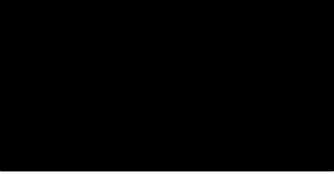
The increase being sought has all the features of financial hardship. Every retailer, manufacturer, service provider, landlord, tenant, home-seeker and homeowner in the shire will suffer increased costs in every aspect of their livelihood compounded by every daily transaction involved in their life. The end result is a decrease in the standard of living for all concerned.

The compounding effect of the special increase is 26% PLUS. In effect this is an increase which forces additional increases every year due to the ultra-high starting point for the next annual rate increase each year. Ballina once had the reputation for prudent financial management but now the public view is that Ballina Council is an ineffective manager with little or no regard for the harm it does to ratepayers living standard.

Please sign the petition below.

Printed Name	Signature	Address	Date
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13/11/2025

Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART)

The PO Box K35  
Haymarket Post Shop NSW 1240  
[ipart@ipart.nsw.gov.au](mailto:ipart@ipart.nsw.gov.au)

**Subject: Submission regarding OBJECTION - PROPOSED SPECIAL RATE RISE (SRV) FOR A 6% INCREASE TO GENERAL RATES EACH YEAR FROM 2026/27 TO 2029/30 FOR BALLINA SHIRE POPULATION.**

Dear IPART,

We, the undersigned residents and ratepayers of the Ballina Shire Council Local Government area, write to formally object to the proposed special rate variation of 6 % plus increase to general rates each year from 2026/27 to 2029/30 for Ballina Shire residents. Only a handful of people, in such a short time, were used to gather this petition. They were amazed by the high level of support. When invited to sign the petitions everyone appeared to be informed of Council's proposal and appeared eager to sign. Ninety eight percent (98 %) of people signed the petitions. (NSW State Government or Ballina Shire Council petition.)

Please see attached petition with 85 signatures objecting to the Special Rate Rise directed to the NSW State Government.

I OBJECT to the proposed special rate increase above; it is not justified given current conditions, rates are high enough. If State and Federal governments are going to continue shifting responsibilities to local councils, they must also provide matching funding.

It is not acceptable to load these burdens on the ratepayers who can't afford it, which number many.

To help households and to fuel small businesses to lower costs, Council should be lowering the financial burden.

Attached please find copy of my letter and the separate petition in objection sent to Ballina Shire Council.

The appropriate confidentiality level is as per the cover sheet.

I look forward to receiving confirmation that my submission has been received and considered as part of the IPART's decision-making process.

Thank you for considering my/our submission.

Yours sincerely,



Concerned Citizen







**PETITION TO STATE GOVERNMENT**

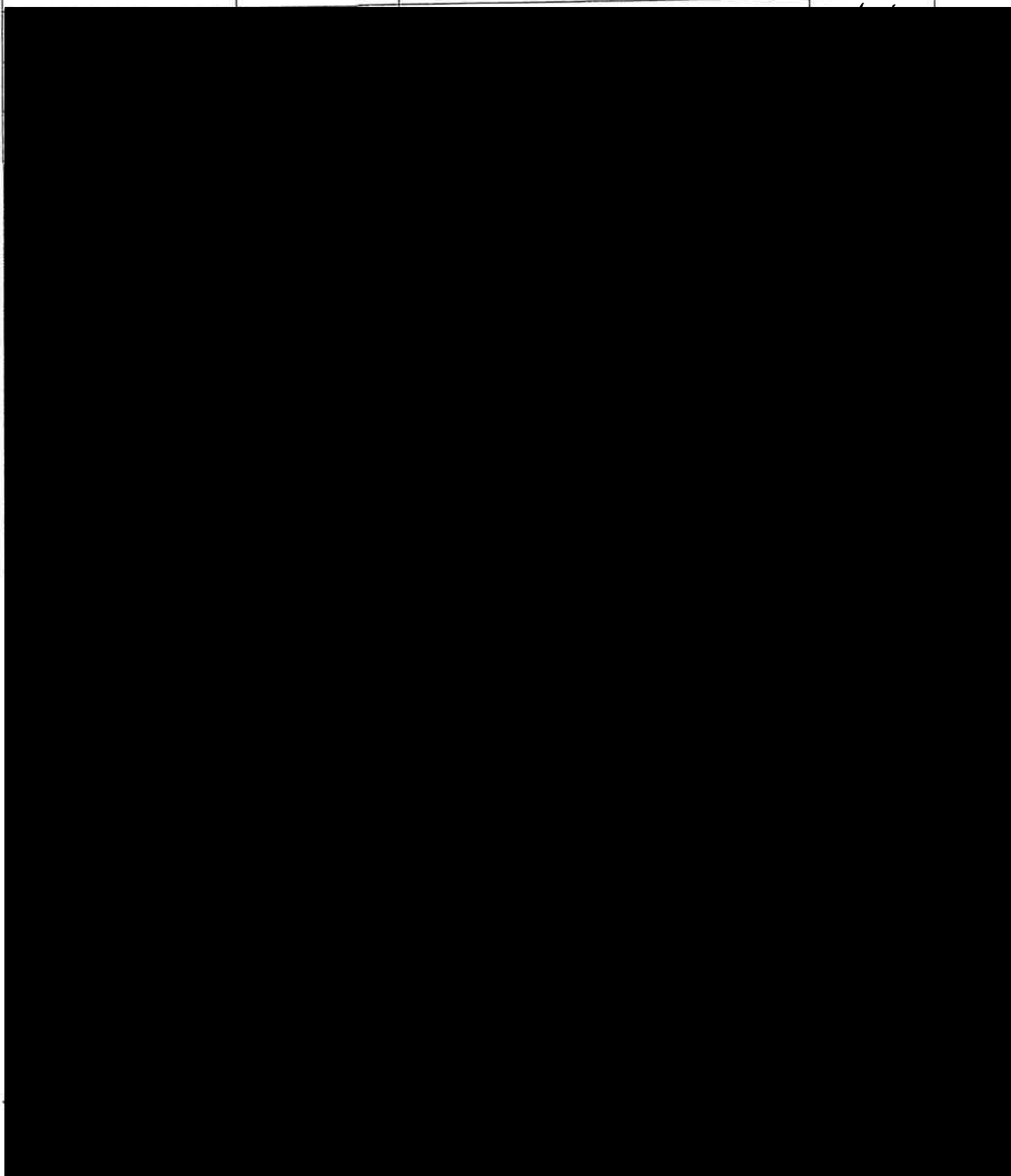
**PROPOSED SPECIAL RATE RISE (SRV) FOR A 6% INCREASE TO GENERAL RATES EACH YEAR FROM 2026/27 TO 2029/30 FOR BALLINA SHIRE POPULATION.**

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It is not acceptable to load these burdens on the ratepayers.

Please sign the petition below.

Printed Name	Signature	Address	Date
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**PETITION TO STATE GOVERNMENT**

**PROPOSED SPECIAL RATE RISE (SRV) FOR A 6% INCREASE TO GENERAL RATES EACH YEAR FROM 2026/27 TO 2029/30 FOR BALLINA SHIRE POPULATION.**

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It is not acceptable to load these burdens on the ratepayers.

Please sign the petition below.

Printed Name	Signature	Address	Date



